



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

WHITEHALL SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Whitehall School

Full Name of School	Whitehall School
DCSF Number	873/6015
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	17 High Street, Somersham, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 3EH
Telephone Number	01487 840966
Fax Number	01487 840966
Email Address	office@whitehallschool.com
Headteacher	Mr Sean Peace
Proprietors	Mr Chris Hutley and Mrs Dee Hutley
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	83
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (38 boys; 45 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 65 3-5 (EYFS): 18 11-18: 0
Number of Day Pupils	83
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Fiona Keene
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	20th – 21st October, 2009

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule* for INTERIM inspections. The inspection is a two day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in March 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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INSPECTION EVIDENCE

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Whitehall School was opened in 1983 as a non-selective independent day school for boys and girls. The school is run on a proprietorial basis. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2007.
- 1.2 The school is situated in Somersham, a village within easy reach of both Cambridge and Huntingdon. The school site contains the main house, an eighteenth century coach house, a library, play areas, a field for games and a covered swimming pool. Most pupils come from the surrounding villages and towns of St Ives, Chatteris, Pidley and Huntingdon.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 83 pupils on roll aged between three and eleven years. Eighty pupils attend on a full-time basis with three attending part time. Of the 83 pupils, eighteen children were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and eighteen were in Years 1 and 2. There were 47 pupils in Years 3 to 6.
- 1.4 The school has identified nine pupils as in need of additional help, usually in literacy or mathematics. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs and none has English as an additional language. Pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including professional, business and farming families.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall, although within this there is a wide variation ranging from a few pupils who are below average to those who are far above.
- 1.6 The majority of pupils leave the school at the age of eleven. In the last two years all have been successful in their entrance tests for the senior schools of their parents' choice. Most continue their education in local independent schools with a few moving on to local maintained secondary schools.
- 1.7 The school aims to help all children to reach their potential academically, personally and socially, irrespective of race, gender, age or ability.
- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 Throughout the school, pupils make particularly good progress, are keen to learn and have a secure understanding of what they have learnt. They write fluently, both creatively and factually. They are articulate and converse easily with adults and with their peers. Mathematical and scientific understanding is of a high quality. Pupils are competent when using information and communication technology (ICT). They apply themselves extremely well and show considerable interest in their work. In Year 6 National Curriculum tests they attain high results when compared with the national average for maintained primary schools. Their progress is good in relation to their overall above average ability. Pupils have many team and individual successes, good performance in team games and widespread success in speech, drama and musical examinations and events.
- 2.2 Good and, on occasions, excellent teaching contributes significantly to the pupils' success in academic work, sport and music. Teachers know their pupils well as individuals and consideration is carefully made to support pupils with different ability needs. Lessons are well-planned. Although comments made on pupils' work are encouraging and supportive, marking does not always show them how they can improve their work. Pupils' independent study skills are good, aided by a wide range of library and ICT skills. An effective programme of personal, social and health education gives pupils good preparation for future experiences and responsibilities. The curriculum is well-planned and enables pupils to reach high standards for their ages. They have good opportunities to study a wide range of subjects, including French from Year 1 and Spanish from Year 6. In addition, the school offers pupils a good variety of extra-curricular activities such as netball, football, 'fitness fun', poetry and reading.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.3 Pupils of all ages have particularly well-developed personal qualities. They are confident and friendly. Their spiritual, social, moral and cultural awareness is well developed. They have a strong sense of moral and social awareness. Pupils fully appreciate the wonders of nature and recognise that rules are essential in order to appreciate a sense of justice. They show a good understanding of different cultures and are tolerant and appreciative of others. Their enthusiastic fund-raising for charities indicates their genuine concern for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility whether as team members, house captains, class monitors or as representatives on the school council. Pupils throughout the school benefit greatly from the excellent relationships that are evident. As they progress through the school they gain in self-dependence and enjoy the opportunities offered in this area.
- 2.4 The pastoral care of pupils is excellent and provides a strong basis for pupils' successes. Pupils feel safe, well looked after and thoroughly enjoy coming to school.
- 2.5 The anti-bullying and safeguarding policies are sensitively written and all necessary procedures are covered. Appropriate training has been undertaken. For those with learning and physical difficulties an access plan with scheduled improvements has

been developed. Health and safety matters, as well as fire precautions, are well managed. First-aid policies and practices are appropriate. Attendance and admissions registers are well kept.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.6 The school is effectively run by the proprietors. They visit regularly and offer good support for the school. They effectively oversee the welfare, health and safety of pupils and maintain a good quality of resources and staffing. Considerable attention is given to the ongoing refurbishment of classrooms and the premises are very well maintained.
- 2.7 The school development plan has appropriate objectives with an emphasis on pastoral and academic matters. The school is aware of the need for a longer term development plan covering a three or four year period, to enable it to review the ongoing development of the school. The school, including the EYFS, is well led and those in senior positions are competent and highly committed. The school is aware that it needs to review the allocation of subject leadership responsibilities.
- 2.8 A developing staff review system is in place with a focus on professional development and teaching quality. Lesson observations are usually carried out by the headteacher, members of the senior management team and newly qualified teacher mentors.
- 2.9 Appropriate safeguarding checks are carried out on those appointed to work in the school. Staff induction, particularly for newly qualified teachers, is good. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated that they are pleased with the progress their children make, the range of subjects offered, behaviour, the attitudes and values the school promotes, the extra-curricular provision and the way that they are able to get involved in the life and work of the school. A small minority felt that they did not get sufficient information about their child's progress and that they did not get sufficient information about school policies and procedures. Inspection evidence, however, shows that parents are well informed about their child's progress and that the information available to them on school policies has improved and is now adequate.
- 2.10 Parents are supplied with all the required information on the school website and in the parents' handbook. The complaints procedures are comprehensive in all respects.

3. MAIN SCHOOL: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the preface).

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

(b) Recommended action

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

1. refine the current school development plan so that it contains a longer term rolling programme for the monitoring, review and development of the curriculum and other aspects of school life;
2. further develop the allocation of subject leadership responsibilities;
3. ensure a greater consistency in the marking of pupils' work so that individual pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

- 4.1 The EYFS is highly effective and meets its aim to provide a happy, welcoming, safe and secure setting where children can meet new challenges positively. Its success stems from the highly effective leadership provided by the EYFS co-ordinator. Children thrive because the staff have a good understanding of how young children develop.
- 4.2 Leadership and management of the setting are strong. All relevant policies are in place to safeguard each child. Thorough risk assessments and records of medical provision are kept. The co-ordinator is highly knowledgeable and through her training ensures that all staff are kept abreast of best Early Years practice. A rich range of data is collected about individual children, and this is brought together to check how well groups of children are doing in all areas of learning. The action plan is a useful tool but has yet to be fully incorporated into the main school's development plan. Links with local agencies are well maintained and parents are happy with the progress of their children. Resources are appropriate and are used highly effectively inside the classroom to create an interesting learning environment. The outside resources do not fully support the six areas of learning. Visitors to school and trips out help pupils gain an understanding of their local community.
- 4.3 Opportunities to learn are particularly good. Planning is mostly thorough and staff successfully ensure a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities that take appropriate account of the age, needs and interests of each child. Self selected and outdoor activities are not always fully supported by planning that furthers the learning of each child. Staffing arrangements ensure high levels of supervision by properly qualified staff. Children are inspired and challenged to explore, experiment and co-operate with each other, which results in much discussion and problem solving, for example when discussing how to create the right sized blanket for a dog using a computer programme. Adults model safe practice, ask open questions and use praise highly effectively enabling increased confidence and successful learning.
- 4.4 Children's achievements are considerable. They make good progress across all areas of the EYFS curriculum. They achieve outstandingly well in their personal, social and emotional development. They communicate well, speaking confidently and listening carefully to adults. Children feel safe and secure in all activities and understand the importance of following school rules. They are encouraged to eat healthily and regular exercise is planned through the well-balanced curriculum. Behaviour is excellent and children's moral development is promoted exceptionally well through caring staff. Each child is treated as a unique individual making going to school a joyful experience for children.

5. EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE: ACTION POINTS

(a) Compliance with the Early Years Foundation Stage requirements

- 5.1 The school's provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and no action is required.

(b) Recommended action

- 5.2 The Early Years Foundation Stage setting should take the following action to improve:
1. develop the outside dedicated play area to challenge children in all six areas of learning;
 2. use information from free choice activities to contribute to planning.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Nunn

Mrs Jan Preece

Mrs Sara Wiggins

Reporting Inspector

Head of Pre-Preparatory Department IAPS School

Early Years Lead Inspector